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Reflection #2

How important is the literature review (and differentiating between various types of journals) and assessing prior research, theorists, and current instructional strategies?

As an Action Researcher it is vitally important to be able to recognize and designate appropriate assessment to the varied assortment of articles available for our research. When researching a particular topic it is to one’s advantage to unravel, decipher or study the works of other researchers and theorists. The primary reason for doing this would be it gives the researcher the opportunity to comprehend and incorporate the theories and practices that have been studied before. There is no good reason to reinvent the wheel or to stumble and fail on work that has already been verified as false. Where one must be careful is in choosing the type of publication he or she chooses to cite.

One of the many types of literature is called a trade journal and can also be referred to as a trade or professional magazine. This type of [magazine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magazine) is published with the intent of [targeting or marketing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Target_market) to a specific [industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industry) or [trade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craft), and its program is to both inform the public and to sell advertising to be found within their pages. The articles typically found in this type of magazine, although interesting and of some importance to the reader, are not likely to be evaluated by experts in that particular field. The value of these articles in scholarly work is extremely limited because they may only express an opinion or educated guess on the part of the writer. The articles usually do not reference previously researched work, lack citations, and fail to be reviewed by other experts in the field. This does not necessarily invalidate the information, but the articles may lack substantial credibility and the reader may wonder if the information is both definitive and accurate.

Other types of articles that, in contrast to trade publications, should be incorporated into any research project are the peer reviewed and double blind peer-reviewed articles. An excellent definition of what peer-review is comes from the [Robert E. Kennedy Library](http://lib.calpoly.edu/) of [California Polytechnic State University](http://www.calpoly.edu): “Many scholarly journals use a process of peer review prior to publishing an article, whereby other scholars in the author's field or specialty critically assess a draft of the article. Peer-reviewed journals (also called refereed journals) are scholarly journals that only publish articles that have passed through this review process. The review process helps ensure that the published articles reflect solid scholarship in their fields.” The authors of these articles are established in their respective fields and the articles that they have written are a product of their research. This type of article can and should be used by other researchers, teachers and students in order to amplify and promote the rationale of any branch of scholarship. George Mason University has an excellent web site to help all on Distinguish Different Types of Journals: <http://library.gmu.edu/education/students/popschol.html>.

The Action Researcher must also be sure to cover an adequate breadth of time in his or her research. Historical journal research alone, however, is not enough. Without understanding current instructional strategies, we cannot hope to have an accurate grasp of what is presently transpiring in our classrooms. The Action Researcher needs to know which strategies are currently being used and how they are working in the classroom. Conversely it is as vitally important to know what strategies have not worked and the reasons for their failure. Strategies are typically based on the ideas of theorists who are not involved in actual classroom instruction hence what sounds good should probably be examined more extensively. An Action Researcher’s sources should cover a range of dates and strategies in order to fully illustrate the vital points he or she is trying to make.

**References:**

<http://lib.calpoly.edu/research/guides/peer.html>

<http://library.gmu.edu/education/students/popschol.html>